

# A Better World

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*Host & Producer*

## *Creating a better world through media*

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To: Federal Communications Commission

I hereby submit these comments to the FCC's "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" 05-311 on "video franchising".

I am appalled, as are hundreds of my colleagues, friends and audience members, by the attempts of the telecommunications industry to undermine public access TV for their own private profiteering, again, *and again*, on the backs of the people without whom they wouldn't even be in business. We are equally upset at the FCC for even considering such radical activities, departing from long-formed and executed, legally- and ethically-binding agreements that support community education, empowerment and activity.

As you know, local franchising is vital to our local cities and communities. They were set up, by agreement, between local municipalities and the cable/telecommunications companies that wanted easements for their cables in public property for greater profit. Based on certain conditions—including the ongoing sustenance of public access TV, we the municipalities agreed. We have held up our part of the agreement, as they should continue to uphold theirs. This is a contractual arrangement that is binding, as said, both legally and ethically.

The FCC has so often sided with the corporate giants—really monopolies—over the people they truly represent. We citizens are profoundly disappointed in your frequent decision-making that rules against us and for big business. It is as though federal agencies work on behalf of these corporations, and the FCC is part of the unholy alliance. It is so evident to those of us who see this "in action" yet again. Big companies would do better than to oppose their consumer base and seek to enjoin us, make us happy. They will profit in the long-term much more greatly. Why this is a mysterious business point to them I know not, but it is obvious to us. The FCC, to do its job, is to look after US, the U.S., not private corporations who are granted privilege, not right, to do business. If they cannot uphold their contractual agreements and remain reasonably profitable, perhaps they ought to consider going out of this business or diversifying!

I have been and am a producer of community TV in NYC, MNN, since 1993. The show is also aired in several other public access stations across the country. I conduct interviews and conversations with some of the leading sung and unsung heroes of our society. People love the show, and look for it weekly. And mine is but among hundreds, or more, across the country. Are you saying that you would consider legislation that would eviscerate this public service that costs the companies just the funds they agreed to pay in the first place for the easements, because they're coming to you now in 2006 to "whine" about not making enough money? Should we take such whining seriously? Should we take up a collection for them? Pennies on the dollar and that's just too much to actually *give back* to the communities that keep them in business and who they say they wish to serve? I think the answer to this is, shall we say, evident?

Local franchises are also cornerstone in the operation of Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) TV. PEG TV provides the important service of supporting localism in the media, and the making and airing of programs that reflect the diversity of American life. PEG TV is very important in providing a place where the public can be informed about local government affairs; and where individuals and community organizations can express their viewpoints and opinions. Democracy

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works best when the widest range of ideas possible is made available to all people, and PEG TV plays an important role in doing this.

As a supporter of Public Access TV in Manhattan, I *urge* the FCC to rule for the maintenance of local franchises in a sweeping vote so that these companies see that the FCC fulfills its mandate of representing the people of this country, which pays its salaries and from which it derives its very existence.

With respect,

Mitchell J. Rabin